SERMON

delivered at

St. Andrew's P. E. Church,

WEST PHILADELPHIA,

SUNDAY, MAY 3rd, 1868;

Being the 5th Anniversary of the Rectorship

OF THE

REV. SAMUEL E. SMITH.

By the Rector.

PHILADELPHIA.
SIDDALL BROTHERS, PRINTERS & BINDERS.
No. 213 South Fifth Street.
1868.

At a meeting of the Vestry of St. Andrew's Church, Philadelphia, held May 5th, 1868, it was

Resolved, That the Sermon preached by the Rector on Sunday morning, the 3rd instant, be published for distribution among the Congregation.

SERMON.

1 Samuel, 7; 13.

"Then Samuel took a stone, and set it between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Ebenezer, saying, Hitherto hath the Lord helped us."

We have reached another mile-stone in our Parochial history, and have gained a higher eminence, from which we can look down upon the few years just passed. And since we can truly say of this Church and congregation, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us," we shall find in our brief review abundant cause for gratitude, and a sufficient ground of assurance to take courage for the future. Our past history, it is true, has been one of hard struggle, and anxious thought; but we should be the happier because our hard work has been blessed of God.

There was never any promise given to Christ's Church of exemption from trials and struggles, because in man's present state, these are necessary for the full developement and strength of our spiritual nature. Every triumph of individuals or of parishes, has been marked by hard work; and every advanced step that has been made by the Church is owing chiefly to the help of the Lord. The history of God's people in every age of the world affords abundant illustration; and his true people have never been slow to acknowledge his goodness.

From the connection in which our text stands, we learn that the children of Israel had been engaged in a war with the Philistines. The Lord used that heathen nation as a rod for the chastisement of his wayward people. But

He did not design that the heathen should triumph over them. That would have been to have departed from His promise. But after bringing them to repentance (which is God's great object in all His chastisements), they were most singularly delivered by the immediate interposition of the Almighty. The Prophet Samuel, and the people generally, acknowledged this with gratitude; and between Mizpeh and Shen they set up a stone as a monument of the Lord's goodness, for his glory, and the encouragement of their descendants, to future ages. They called that monument, Ebenezer, "the stone of help," and said, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us."

In many parts of the world may be found monuments of gratitude which pious hearts have erected to the honor of that great Being whose help has never been withheld from His people. And if there was a proper appreciation of God's goodness in the hearts of men, there would be more of them; not merely in Church buildings erected for His worship— in free beds in hospitals where His poor and sick ones may be provided for;— but more precious than these, in the monuments of God-fearing, humanity-loving, Christ-like lives. Let any one carefully review his or her past life, not with a view to mourn over hardships, as the manner of some is, but to be thankful for the special blessings and deliverances, and a candid and honest heart will find so many as to make him blush for his ingratitude. And it would be well for us all to do that frequently, as a means of adding joy to the present hour, and encouraging our timid souls for the future struggles of life.

To-day marks the fifth anniversary of our ministry in the Parish of St. Andrew's. Knowing better than many of the Parishioners how signally God's hand has been over us and prospered our work, we can truly say, "Hitherto hath the

Lord helped us," and with a grateful heart we begin another year, trusting to Him to guide our minds and hearts, and praying that He may raise up a noble band of Christian soldiers to fight against the world, the flesh and the devil, that St. Andrew's congregation may be behind none in their zeal to honor the Savior's name.

It is not generally known in the present congregation, and therefore it may be of some interest to mention the fact, that the lot upon which our former church building was erected, was originally donated for the site of *St. Mark's* Protestant Episcopal Church, and a building bearing that name was erected in the year 1819. It was consecrated on Thursday, August 9th, 1821, by Right Reverend William White, of this Diocese. Subsequently it was sold by the Sheriff, and at a later day, the old building was fired by an incendiary.

The first Rector of old St. Marks, was the Reverend James Montgomery, D. D., who resigned the Parish after a few months to take the Rectorship of St. Stephen's Church in Tenth Street, then just built. The Parish remained vacant for a long time, occasional services being held by several neighboring clergymen, among whom were the Rev. Richard Hall, of St. Mary's, and the Rev. George A. Durborow, of Fairmount.

For many years the old walls remained standing until my now sainted predecessor undertook the reorganization of the Church. A Sunday School was organized in the Public School-house, on Sunday, March 23rd, 1850. The School was shortly afterwards removed to an "upper room" hired for the purpose, in which the first public service was held. Of the teachers present when the school was organized, one only is now with us, and she still continues an earnest laborer in this department of Parochial work. When the

new organization of *St. Andrew's* held the first public service, an interesting coincidence occurred in the Psalter which was then read, the words of the Psalmist truly describing the case of the old church; "They have set fire upon Thy holy places, and have defiled the dwelling places of Thy name, even unto the ground." The walls were still standing when the lot was purchased for St. Andrew's, and were re-appropriated to their original sacred use, through the self-denying efforts of Rev. George W. Natt. A Vestry was organized on the 2nd of December, 1850, who chose the present name for the Parish. The gentlemen who composed the first vestry, were Joseph S. Keen, Thomas J. Natt, Thomas A. Robinson, John L. Goddard, Thomas Robins, Jacob Brown, Thomas Allibone, John Bohlen, Franklin Fell, William D. Kelly, Edward F. Gay, George R. Blakiston. Mr. Edward F. Gay is the only one now connected with the Parrish. The act of incorporation bears date July 29th, 1851.

My predecessor, Mr. Natt, whom "none knew but to love," labored hard, in ill health and with only a meagre support, to build up the waste places of Zion. God crowned his self-sacrificing efforts with success; and on the 23rd day of June, 1852, the Church was opened for Divine service. On the 23rd day of June, 1854, just two years afterwards, the Church was consecrated by Bishop Alonzo Potter, who informed me a few months previous to his death, that he was present in the church with Bishop White, at the consecration of old St. Mark's.

Mr. Natt worked faithfully as a servant of Jesus Christ. His health being very much wasted, he was compelled from this cause to resign the Parish in January, 1860. In February, 1863, he was called away from earth to the Church triumphant above, leaving behind a name revered not only

by his own people, but by all of every name and creed, who were endeared to him from his consistent walk with God. The results of his ministry cannot be expressed in figures. He labored night and day for the spiritual and temporal welfare of souls here, forgetting himself that he might glorify the name and extend the kingdom of his Lord and Master. The simple record of the Baptisms, Confirmations, Services and other work in the Parish Register is not all. We are reaping yet the fruits of that devoted man's labors. In the great Register on high, a nobler record has been kept than his unostentatious hand recorded here; and the great day will reveal a shining record which shall receive, for Jesus Christ's sake, the blessed reward, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

The Reverend W. H. N. Stewart L. L. D., succeeded Mr. Natt, taking charge on the first Sunday in January, 1860. Mr. Stewart's Rectorship extended over the darkest period in our late war. The effects of that war were sadly experienced in this, as well as in other parishes, and were no slight cause of retarding its growth and prosperity. Mr. Stewart held frequent services in Hestonville, but resigning in 1863, the flattering prospects of building up a parish there were not realized until the year 1865, when the services were renewed.

Our own ministry began on the first Sunday in May, 1863. Five years have passed away. What God hath wrought through so humble an instrumentality may perhaps be expressed in a few words. The Parish, at that time, was found to be in a languishing condition, owing chiefly to the lack of Pastoral services; the Parish having been without a Rector for several months. In succeeding such a man as the first Rector of this Parish, to build upon the good foundation which his earnest soul had laid, and to enlarge the

work which had been so well begun by him, we felt our weakness; and in view of the great amount of work necessary to be done, we felt with the Apostle, "Who is sufficient for these things?" Trusting in God "to give the increase," we set out, "determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." God *has* blessed the poor efforts of these five years, for which we "thank Him and take courage," looking to Him for strength and wisdom in the future to perform our allotted task. On the 1st of May, 1863, there were fifty actual communicants. There have been since then: Baptisms, Infants, 168, Adults, 27, total 195. Confirmed, 64, at six confirmations. Communicants added; new, 56, by removal, 80; Communicants lost by death and removal, 66, leaving at present 120. There have been 28 marriages solemnized, and 84 persons buried. Public services on Sundays 588, on other days 68, making 766 public services, including the labors at the Mission Church in Hestonville, where a Church building has been erected and the Parish of St. James organized. This child of St. Andrew's has been the object of much care. Assisted by students from the Divinity School, the Church there has been open every Sunday for morning and evening service, with a well organized Sunday School. But recently, owing to the growth of St. Andrew's, and the consequent demand for more personal labor, I have been compelled to resign St. James. From an inadequate number of teachers, our Sunday School has not grown as it might otherwise have done. There is a large field for the labors of devoted Christians in this department of Church work— a field which I hope soon to see filled with earnest laborers.

The amount of money collected in the five years has been as follows: Poor, $ 46.58; Sunday School, $ 33.00; Improvements, Current expenses, etc., $ 2,693.15; Pew Rents, $ 4,146.89; Payment of Debt, $ 9,467.96; Dioscesan Missions, $ 61.83; Domestic Missions, $ 26.50; Foreign Missions, $ 26.50; Episcopal Fund, $ 51.66; Convention Fund, $ 18.00; Hospital, $ 43.50; Disabled Clergy, $ 38.50; Education, $ 21.00; Miscellaneous, $ 131.16; Total for all purposes, $ 16,693.43. The Sunday School has contributed various amounts toward charitable objects, not included in this statement, and has lately undertaken the education of a child in Africa, under the Rev. J. G. Auer. From the beginning, the Parish was dependent, in great part, upon outside help for support; at Easter of '65 it had become self-supporting. Owing to frequent removals, the growth of the Church has been very much retarded; as an illustration, only nine families are now connected with the Parish, of forty reported by Mr. Natt in 1860. Of twenty four reported in 1863, only twelve now remain. The present number is sixty-five. Many causes combined to retard the spiritual and temporal progress of the Church, but under God's blessing a new era dawned. In a report made to the congregation by a committee of the Vestry, at Easter, 1865, the Committee, speaking of our former building, said;

"The present site has for years been one that has not accommodated the majority of the congregation. Its surroundings are not agreeable, and the building is small and incommodious. For many months the vestry have contemplated a sale of the present church property, and the erection of a new building in a more convenient and attractive place. Such a change will, it is believed, promote our prosperity still more decidedly, and make St. Andrew's one of the leading Episcopal Churches of West Philadelphia, as its age and history entitle it be."

The object then contemplated has at last, in part, been accomplished. The old property was sold in September, 1865, and the corner stone of the present building was laid on the 17th day of October of the same year. The first service was held in the Church on Sunday, July 9th, 1866. And when two subscriptions to the Building Fund, already promised, are paid in, the entire indebtedness on the *building* will be extinguished. Aided by a few willing hearts, (for whom we trust a blessed reward is in reversion) this much has been accomplished; this building is our Ebenezer; "hitherto hath the Lord helped us;" let us "thank God and take courage." Trusting in Him we need have no fears for the future. Let us not be slack in the great work which He has committed to us; but let us renew our dilligence to glorify His name for what He has done, that this may prove the gate of Heaven to many souls.

Five years ago, the most sanguine could not have anticipated the results which we see and enjoy to-day. And since God has done for us more than we could either desire or deserve, how shall we show our gratitude? How much better *can* we do it, than by renewed exertions to work more faithfully in His vineyard, and to resolve now, and pledge ourselves to it in the communion this morning, that we will be more earnest for the glory of His great name, that we will not loiter in the field of Christian duty, that "whatsoever our hands find to do, we will do it with our might." We must not think that our work is over because we have accomplished, under God, this much. Far from it, my brethren. We have only made a small beginning compared with what, I trust, shall yet be accomplished here. Much still remains to be done. The field is already white to harvest. Many families who have no Church connection, many children who attend no Sunday School, are yet to be brought in, and

are waiting to be brought, by us. There is a great work yet to be done, and every worshiper here may do something toward reaping in the precious harvest field. And until every family is sought out and provided with spiritual privileges, until every means is exhausted by which the Gospel can be carried to souls now in the darkness of unregenerate nature, our work remains unfinished, our duty unperformed; and this is not only the Pastor's work, but is a duty of the people likewise.

In the great spiritual temple of the Church of Jesus Christ, you are to be *living*, not dead, stones. The life within will die out unless it be made active in outward manifestation. The fires on the altar of our hearts need continual replenishing by renewed exertion to glorify God.

When the Apostle was rescued by the Savior, and his heart became changed, he asked, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Gratitude for what the Lord had done for him, led him to seek to do His work. And by his life of grateful devotion he teaches us that Jesus is not only our Savior in whom we may trust, not only our God in whom we may believe; but also our *Master* whom we must *serve*. *To be* was not enough for him; *to believe* did not content his sense of obligation. "Lord, what wilt thou have me *to do?*" was Saul's question, and, brethren, it must be *ours*. Each *individual* is to gird on the armor, and do battle for righteousness' sake. Our responsibilities are mainly personal. The command is, "*Go thou*, and work in my vineyard," There is no abating of the debt of duty we owe to God by simply enrolling our names on the records of Parish organizations. All true Church work is individual work. God looks at it in that way; man must so give account of it. Pastors and people, in their individual capacity, the leaders of Christ's flock, and the most obscure followers, are to

stand together in the great day, and to make response to the same question, and give account of "the deeds done in the body" as they have reflected or refracted the glory of God.

God's blessing is usually in proportion to the degree of personal effort put forth. The individual or the Parish which manifests life and activity, will find increased strength and increased blessings. The present condition of this Parish is the result of the labors of comparatively few. What may we not be in another year, if each individual, however obscure, will resolve, in God's strength, to be more devoted, more laborious, more active! Each member of this congregation can do that; and God will hold each of us accountable for what He has given the ability to perform.

There is room in the Sunday School for many more laborers, and a harvest of precious souls to be gathered into the garner of God by those who will bring to this work a heart filled with love toward God. The Monday evening Sewing Society affords an opportunity for *all* to do something for the Church. The Mite Society which now does not number one fourth of the congregation, might be increased four-fold. These are organizations already in existance, and I hope, by God's blessing, to organize other instrumentalities wherein every one can do something for Jesus.

My friends, when asked to do your duty for the glorious cause which demands your every talent, do not ask to be excused; for if showers of grace are to descend on this Parish more copiously than heretofore, every communicant, and every worshipper, must exert an influence. Useful parishes are those which are distinguished by the zeal and piety of their members; and to the laity and clergy alike the command is "Go preach the Gospel." We do not want

to hear any more frivolous excuses for idleness; but we want you to be a united, holy and active people, who shall attract the poor moths which flutter about every bright light that shines, and save souls that might otherwise perish. We want you to feel for the spiritual destitution of those who live at our own doors, who are like "sheep having no shepherd;" to have compassion on them, and pray God to turn their hearts, that they may go in and out among us and find pasture.

You see now how "the Lord hath hitherto helped us;" you see how He hath owned the efforts already put forth for the glory of His great name. And since every one has abilities with which to serve God, I tell you plainly that it is solemnly incumbent on you to employ them for Christ. You must all be Christians in name, in faith and in action. You must know and feel that your Master expects actual, constant, personal service; and if you have not yet found your place and your work, look upward, as Saul did, and ask, "Lord, what wilt thou have *me* to do?" Shrink from nō responsibility to advance the kingdom of our ascended Lord. Let that be the object nearest your hearts. Withhold no sacrifice that will extend its bounds. And remember that according to the measure of your zeal and faithfulness in His service *now*, will be your happiness hereafter. *Every* bee in a hive is compelled to work, and in the great Gospel hive there is no room for drones.

In coming to the table this morning, we shall regard that act as a pledge from you individually, that you intend to engage in more active service for Jesus. The Master looking down from his Mediatorial throne in heaven, will note the renewed pledge of to-day; and to each soul He whispers "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

Ere another five years shall roll by, some of us, perhaps all of us, may be in another world, and listen to another record of our labors. Opportunities will be over then, new resolves will not avail there. What shall the record be? How large a harvest will you reap there? These are questions, beloved, for you to consider now, and your own lives here must furnish an answer. By every deed of life, you are making up your own verdict, and writing the imperishable record by which you shall be judged.

O, let that record be filled with noble deeds of piety done in Christ's great name! Use it, use it daily and hourly, that it may yield a ten-fold increase for eternity! And when life's battle shall be over, and you lay your armor by, it shall be yours to utter the triumphant language, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me in that day."